

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Warns Immigrant Community to Beware Of Companies Advertising "Servicios de Notarios"

(Phoenix, Ariz. - September 7, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced the settlement of two cases in which notary publics placed ads in Spanish language publications to draw clients based on their misinterpretation of the term "notarios." The two firms played off different meanings of the English word "notary" and the Spanish word "notario."

"These ads are cleverly worded and placed in popular Spanish language magazines and newspapers," Goddard said. "It is important for the community to understand the difference in services so they are not taken advantage of during a time when they may be desperate for assistance."

In Arizona, a Notary Public who advertises services in a language other than English must include the following statement *"I am not an attorney and cannot give legal advice about immigration or any other legal matter."* The statute was created to prevent fraud because in most Latin American countries a "notario" implies that the person is a licensed attorney.

A typical "notario" scam works this way: A person registers as a notary public in Arizona and then implies to Spanish-speaking clients that a "notario publico" or a licensed attorney can help with immigration or other legal issues. The businesses charge hundreds or even thousands of dollars to provide advice they are not qualified to give. The notario may charge high fees for filing unnecessary documents or provide poor quality services that jeopardize clients' cases.

To prevent future misunderstandings, the Attorney General's Office is looking for misleading ads and will enforce the requirement to include the legal disclaimer with local businesses.

The Attorney General's Office has settled with Barbara Morejon, President of Immigration Assistance Center in Phoenix, and Esperanza Rodriguez, President of Hermanos Abrahán, Inc. in Phoenix, for failing to include the legal advice disclaimer as required by law. Morejon and Rodriguez advertised "notario" services in various Spanish-language magazines without including the required language in their ads. The women are not accused of scamming their clients, only that they failed to include the required language in their ads.

The consent judgments with Morejon and Rodriguez include:

- Morejon will be required to pay \$5,000 and comply with the statutory requirement of adding the legal advice disclaimer to her ads. The consent judgment was filed in Maricopa County Superior Court and is waiting for final approval.
- Rodriguez is required to pay \$500 and fulfill the statutory requirement of adding the legal advice disclaimer to her ads. Maricopa County Superior Court approved the settlement last month.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Arizona Attorney General's Office by visiting the Web site at www.azag.gov and filing an online complaint or calling the Office at 602.542.5763 in Phoenix; 520.628.6504 in Tucson; or 1.800.352.8431 outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas.

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